

What is democracy? Why democracy?

1. Do you think that elections are held in the following countries according to democratic principles?

Give reasons for your answer.

(a) Saudi Arabia (b) Estonia (c) Fiji

No, elections are not held according to the democratic principles in Saudi Arabia, Estonia and Fiji.

According to the democratic principles every adult in the State is given the voting right without any distinction of caste, colour, creed, sex, place of birth or economic status etc.

In Saudi Arabia women do not have the right to vote.

In Estonia, people belonging to Russian minority find it difficult to get the voting right.

In Fiji, the vote of an indigenous Fiji has more value than that of an Indian - Fijian.

2. Give your own comment on the following statements.

Raju: "India is, the best example for democracy, the rulers are elected by the people."

Preetha: "Pakistan is an example for democracy. General Musharaff conducted elections in 2002 and 2008 and people have representatives to the National and Provincial Assemblies."

Nisha: Nepal is heading to be a Republic. People elect their leaders and rule for them. Democracy has been established there.

The statement of Raju is correct. India is the best example for a democratic form of government. The rulers are elected by the people. Change in government has taken place several times. The president,

the head of the State, and the cabinet are elected by the representatives of the people.

The statement of Preetha is not correct. We cannot agree with her. Though General Pervez Musharaff conducted a referendum in 2002 after overthrowing a democratically elected government it was based on malpractices and fraud. Besides he issued a 'Legal Framework order' that amended the constitution of Pakistan. According to this order the president can dismiss the national and Provincial Assemblies. The work of the civilian government is to be supervised by a National Security Council. Though elections were held and elected representatives were given some powers, the final power rests with General Musharaf himself.

In 2008 election the President's party lost elections and the opposition parties formed a coalition government. It depends on the President's attitude to the decisions of the new government whether Pakistan people have got back their democratic rights.

3. **"Democracy cannot get us every thing and is not the solution to all problems. But it is considered the best form of government." Justify this statement.**

Democracy offers better chances of a good decision, it is likely to respect people's own wishes and allows different kinds of people to live together. Even when it fails to do some of these things, it allows a way of correcting its mistakes and offers more dignity to all citizens. That is why democracy is considered the best form of government.

4. **India is the largest democratic country in the world. Political parties play an important role in the Indian democratic system. But in India most of the political parties are not able to form gov-**

ernment at the Centre without the help of regional political parties today. Do you agree with this statement? Why?

Today regional parties are becoming very popular in the Indian Party System. Regional parties are becoming popular because these parties generally articulate a regional identity and particularism based on religion, language or culture. Moreover, regional parties are primarily concerned with exploiting local sources of discontent or pressing demands based on language, caste, community or region. The greatest service rendered by the regional parties is that they have focussed attention of the people in remote areas on various political and economic issues. Today no political party is able to form government at the Centre without the support of regional parties. In this way regional parties are becoming more and more influential and effective in the Indian party system.

Constitutional Design

1. 'Preamble is the key to the Indian Constitution.' Analyse the statement and give reason.

The preamble contains the ideals and basic principles of the Indian Constitution. Besides, it is the introduction to our Constitution and it serves as a guiding light of the Constitutional ideals and principles like Democracy, Socialism and Secularism. Still it is very important, because it shows the way the government ought to be run.

2. The importance of a constitution is more in a democratic country. Do you agree? Why?

The Constitution is important in a democratic country in more than one way.

- (a) Constitution is superior to all the laws of a country.
- (b) It specifies how the government would be composed and how it would function.

- (c) The Constitution also makes provisions for the fundamental rights of the people.
- (d) The Constitution regulates the relationship between the government and citizens.

3. The leaders of India decided to celebrate 26 January 1950 as the day to enforce the Constitution of India. Give reason.

In December 1929, the Congress in its Lahore Session had decided to fight for Poorna Swaraj or Complete Independence and 26 January 1930 was celebrated as the Independence Day since then. That is why our leaders decided to celebrate 26 January 1950 as the day to enforce the Constitution of India.

Electoral Politics

1. A former Chief Election Commissioner joined a political party and contested elections. There are various views on this issue. One view is that a former Election Commissioner is an independent citizen and has a right to join any political party and to contest election. According to the other view, leaving this possibility open can affect the impartiality of the Election Commission. So, former Election Commissioners must not be allowed to contest any elections. Which position do you agree with and why?

The former Chief Election Commissioner should not be allowed to contest any election. According to article 324 of the Indian constitution there is a provision for Election Commission which will be responsible for conducting the elections of the Union Parliament, State Legislatures, President and Vice President. If the former Election Commissioner is allowed to contest election the impartiality of the Election Commission will be effected. The members of the commission is likely to favour a former colleague and

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their boss. Besides the present officials may think that if they favour a particular party they are likely to contest election after their tenure.

Working of Institutions

1. The power mongering politicians prefer Lok Sabha instead of Rajya Sabha. Give reasons.

Lok Sabha can control the executive more effectively than the Rajya Sabha because the executive is formed from the party or coalition of parties that have got majority in the Lok Sabha. The members of the Lok Sabha are directly elected by the people and they control the purse. Money bills can be originated only in the Lok Sabha. Above all Lok Sabha has the power to remove the executive through a no confidence motion. Rajya Sabha has no such power.

2. The parliamentary system of executive vests many powers in the legislature for controlling the executive. What, do you think, is it so necessary to control the executive?

In a parliamentary system there are two executives - one real and the other nominal. The real executive, the Prime Minister is responsible to the legislature. Most parliamentary system have a nominal executive. In India, we have parliamentary system. The President is the nominal head and Prime Minister is the real head. The Prime Minister remains in office until he enjoys the confidence of the legislature. The legislature controls the purse and the policies of the government. It is a body of the representatives of the

people and ensures the welfare of the people. The legislature should control the executive to make sure that the government is sensitive to public expectations and responsible and accountable to their needs and aspirations. If the legislature has no power the executive shall try to concentrate all powers and become a despot.

Democratic Rights

1. What prompted Dr. Ambedkar to call the right to Constitutional Remedies, 'the heart and soul' of our Constitution?

If our rights are violated by fellow citizens, private bodies or by the government we can seek remedy through courts. If it is a Fundamental Right, we can directly approach the Supreme Court or the High Court of a state. That is why Dr. Ambedkar called the Right to Constitutional Remedies, the 'heart and soul' of our Constitution.

2. Can the NHRC punish the guilty? What are its activities?

The NHRC cannot punish a guilty person. It is the responsibility of the court to punish the guilty. The NHRC makes independent inquiry into any case of violation of human rights. It takes general steps to promote human rights in the country. The Commission present its findings and recommendations to the government or intervene in the court on behalf of the victims. Like any court it can summon witnesses, question any government official, demand any official paper, visit any prison for inspection or send its own team for on the spot inquiry.